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United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications Washington, DC 20250-1300

Letter No. 2671

July 22, 1994

HEALTH CARE FOR RURAL AMERICANS -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said health care reform is important for the health of rural Americans and the health of rural communities. Espy added that if we neglect to pass universal coverage, we will be short-changing many rural families. Under the current health care system, rural Americans and farmers are struggling, Espy said. Only one in five rural Americans have health insurance, including only 31 percent of agricultural workers. Many face insurance discrimination and lack bargaining power. Secretary Espy said, "The bottom line is that farmers and rural Americans are not being given a fair shake. Universal coverage will give hard-working Americans the level playing field they deserve." Contact: Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623.

1995 FARM BILL FORUMS -- USDA held two public forums in Washington July 20 to receive recommendations on domestic marketing and promotion policy issues related to the 1995 Farm Bill. Patricia Jensen, acting assistant secretary for marketing and inspection services, said these forums were designed to let all interests--whether farmer, agribusiness, cooperatives or consumer--provide input on programs and policies that will be considered during the 1995 Farm Bill debate. One forum focused on assistance to agricultural and non-agricultural cooperatives as well as other rural user organizations. The second forum discussed development of farmers' markets, niche and specialty crop markets and industrial uses of agricultural products. Those unable to attend, but wishing to comment, can send written statements to USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service by July 31. Contact: Connie Crunkleton (202) 720-8998.

SAFE FOOD HANDLING STRESSED FOR SIX STATES -- USDA has stressed safe handling and cooking of meat and poultry in six states where outbreaks of foodborne illness linked to E. coli 0157:H7 bacterium are being reported. Reports have been made from Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, California, Vermont and Connecticut. USDA is working with state health departments and urging that consumers follow safe handling instructions now appearing on all raw meat and poultry packages. Also, USDA is working with local and state health officials and having product recalled when appropriate. Consumers wishing additional information can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, 1-800-535-4555. Contact: Jacque Knight (202) 720-9113.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE TO "FREEDOM SCHOOLS" -- USDA'S Summer Food Service Program will play a key role in 17 "Freedom Schools" nationwide. The Children's Defense Fund established these schools to deal with what Marian Wright Edelman has called the crisis of black children in the 1990's. Through these schools, disadvantaged children will be provided a safe haven, positive role models, academic stimulation and nourishing meals. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ellen Haas said USDA's commitment to fighting childhood hunger is year-round. Haas added that USDA is actively promoting the Summer Food Service Program and working with the "Freedom Schools" offers an opportunity to reach children at 17 more sites. Contact: Johna Pierce (202) 720-1691.

WETLANDS RESERVE SIGNUP -- Farmers and ranchers in 20 states will receive acceptance soon for enrollment in USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said landowners are selling permanent easements to USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service to restore cropland and other acreage to productive wetland habitat for future generations. The 75,000 acres chosen from the 590,000 acres offered provided the highest environmental benefits in the most cost-effective manner. This \$66 million program includes participants in Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.

HEALTH CARE NEWS CONFERENCE -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy joined Senators and farm leaders at a news conference on Capitol Hill July 20 to highlight benefits of universal health care to rural America. He was joined by Senators Tom Daschle of South Dakota, Tom Harkin of Iowa, Paul Simon of Illinois and Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois. Farm leaders participating included Lee Swenson of the National Farmers Union, Kathy Ozer of the American Family Farm Coalition, Gary Goldberg of the American Corn Growers Association, Frank Matheson of the National Association of Farmer Elected Committeemen, and Tom Ashbridge of the American Agriculture Movement. Contact: Julie Demeo (202) 720-4623.

BIOSAFETY SYMPOSIUM -- The Third International Symposium on the Biosafety Results of Field Tests of Genetically Modified Plants and Microorganisms is scheduled for November 13-16 in Monterey, CA. Keynote address will focus on "Environmental and Social Impact of Genetically Modified Organisms" and what has been learned in recent years. U.S. Department of Agriculture is one of the symposium's co-sponsors. Contact: Al Young, (703) 235-4419.

EXPORT ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES -- On July 18, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy announced a 1.179 million-metric-ton, multi-country package of initiatives under USDA's Export Enhancement Program to boost sales of U.S. wheat flour during the 1994/95 international marketing year. **Contact:** Lynn K. Goldsbrough (202) 720-3930.

BACKPACKERS: PRACTICE FOOD SAFETY -- Getting away and exploring the great outdoors is a favorite American pastime. To some that means putting on a backpack and hiking far off into the wilderness. Scenery is beautiful, air is clean, peace and quiet are refreshing, but what do you eat? USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline advises backpackers who carry meals with them to plan their menus with food safety in mind. Consider other factors, too, such as weight of food, preparation and trash disposal. Susan Conley, director of the Hotline, reminds hikers that food poisoning bacteria grow rapidly at warm temperatures. Even a day hiking with perishable foods stored improperly could result in foodborne illness. When planning a hiking trip menu, many backpackers choose foods that do not require refrigeration. Canned meat, poultry and fish--although heavy to carry--are good choices. Just remember to take the can opener! Contact: Susan Conley (202) 720-5604.

FAX -- You can obtain our radio and TV programming information and the **Broadcasters Letter** through your facsimile machine by calling USDA's AgNewsFax. Use the telephone connected to your FAX machine to call (202) 690-3944. At voice prompts press 1, press 4, then to receive **Broadcasters Letter**, press 9200; radio newsline information, press 9250; TV contents billboard, press 9260; TV scripts, press 9270. After all your selections, then press #, press 3, and press the **start** button on your FAX machine.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1938 -- Brenda Curtis talks with the head of USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline Susan Conley about food safety and picnics. (Weekly cassette -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME # 1419 -- Picnic foods and food safety; safe picnicking; biodiesel; report shows environmental successes; what is USDA? (Weekly cassette -- 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1929 -- GATT update; report shows soil erosion progress; feed grain update; "bug" -- efficient ethanol producer; aflatoxin could rob vitamin E. (Weekly cassette -- news features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thursday, July 28, farm numbers report, land in farms report; Friday, July 29, agriculture prices report, catfish production report, oil crops outlook; Tuesday, August 2, weekly weather and crop report. **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. Our newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

ACTUALITIES -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy on health care reform and other issues.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports from Georgia on the flooding -- its effect on agriculture and USDA efforts to assist victims; **Patrick O'Leary** reports on USDA's proposed poultry inspection improvement plan, and on the federal "Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities" program to revitalize U.S. communities.

SATELLITE COORDINATES FOR TV NEWSFEEDS:

Galaxy 7, Transponder 9, Channel 9, Audio 6.2 or 6.8, Downlink frequency 3880 Mhz. Available on Thursdays 3:45 - 4:00 p.m., EDT; Mondays 11:00 - 11:15 a.m., EDT.

Comments and suggestions are welcome regarding USDA broadcast services. Call Larry A. Quinn, (202) 720-6072; write 1618-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-1300.

OFF MIKE

GOLD AWARD...was earned by **WNIX**, Greenville, MS, from the Mississippi Association of Broadcasters for its service to the farm community. **Chuck Early** is at the mike for their Mississippi Farm Focus program.

AGRITALK...is a new nationally-distributed, call-in radio talk program for farmers and rural residents that is a joint project of **Ken Root**, **Rich Hull**, and **Mark Vail**. Mark says it's not a "How to Farm" show, but rather an agricultural and rural issues program. August 1 is start date.

40 YEARS...at the mike. That's the milestone **Lee Kline** has reached at **WHO**, Des Moines, IA. **Herb Plambeck**, the one who hired Kline, reports that Lee was honored recently for his outstanding service. Word is that Lee may unplug his mike in 1995.

NINE YEARS...that's the anniversary celebrated last month by AgriAmerica Network, Indianapolis, IN. Gary Truitt developed the network which has grown to serving 60 radio stations across Indiana with farm news and market programs.

AMERICA'S FORESTS...a video produced by our Center for the Forest Service, has been selected for international distribution by the U.S. Information Agency.

PROUD MOM...is a new title for Lori Spiczka Holm of our radio team who is "off mike" for a few weeks spending full-time with new son, Marcus Quintillian Holm.

CALL FROM ENGLAND...came recently from **Andrew Waller** who is exploring a video series on U.S. government films made during World War II years. He asked about a USDA film done in 1942 called, "Hemp for Victory." Back then, hemp was grown for rope-making.

LARRY A. QUINN, Chief

Video, Teleconference and Radio Center



United States Department of Agriculture Office of Communications Room 1618-S Washington, DC 20250-1300

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